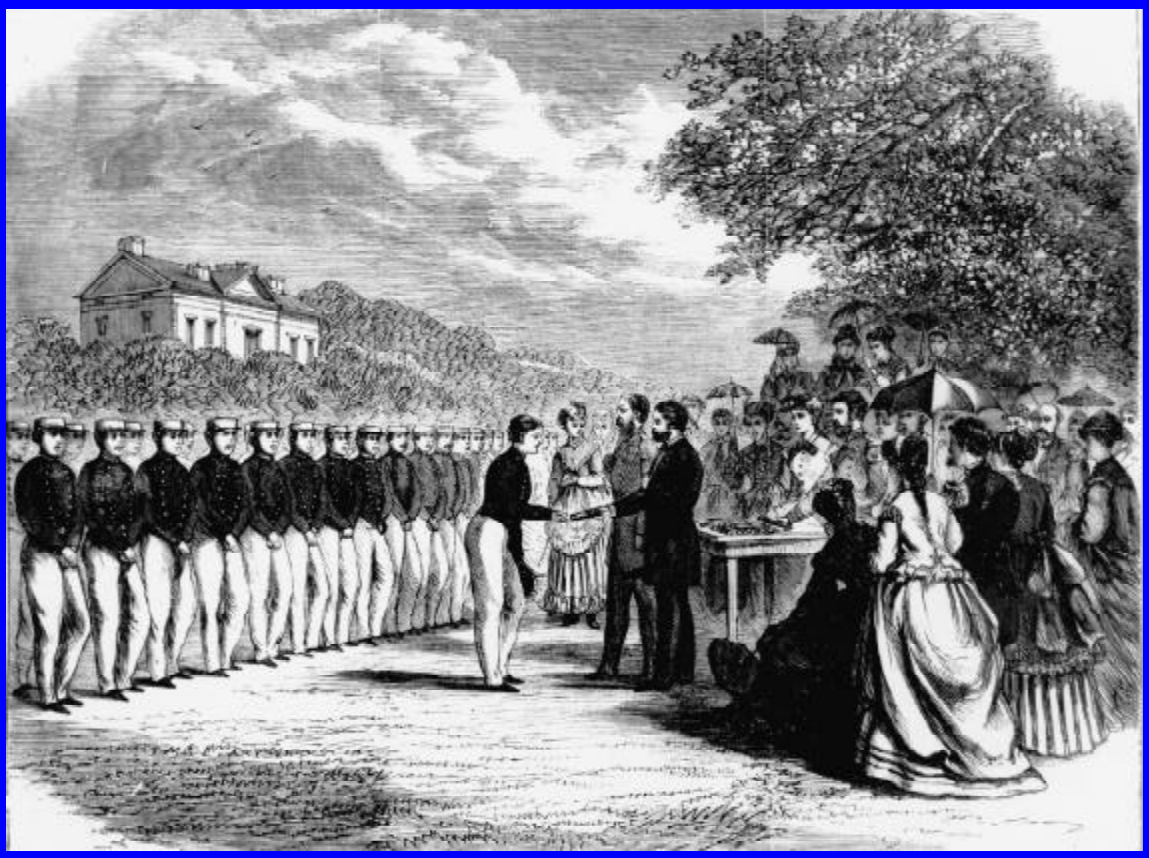
The Character Quarterly

Commencement 2002 | Volume 6, Number 4 | United States Naval Academy

What a man's mind can create, a man's character can control.
Thomas Edison



Preparing to be a Junior Officer

by Midn 2/C Irish McGhee

Service selection is long over. The class of '02 knows where they will be after graduation, but are they ready? Are they ready to tackle life on their own, without Mom, Dad, or the Academy? Are they ready to become responsible Junior Officers? Bancroft Hall has been more than generous over the past four years, but has this comfort prepared the firsties for a barbed and biting world? Do they know how to lead, motivate, and inspire, as well as to balance a budget, price an apartment, buy house insurance, pay taxes, or get up in the morning without a chow call? Some might know, yet there are overwhelming amounts of first class midshipman who do not.

So what should firsties focus on during their final year, the Brigade or learning how to cope with their futures? Out in the "real world" they will have to cook, clean, and manage a home in addition to working in the Navy or Marine Corps, without the help of four thousand other shipmates. Their paychecks will be under their own personal care to disperse as they see fit. While adjusting to life as a junior officer, they will also have to muddle through the hazards of civilian life.

How do they prepare for graduation and what lies ahead? Maybe this should have all started when they got to the Academy. What if, during second semester, first-class year, they lived over the Academy wall? Allowing the firsties to live off the Yard during second semester naturally evolves from their current privileges. They can drive and park on the Yard, which means that parking, is already provided for first class commuters. Many may take the option of living close to the Yard, which would conveniently allow them to walk to and from the Academy. With the incorporation of unlimited weekends, the only first class midshipmen normally found on the Yard after Friday classes are those on duty, restriction, or fourth-class privileges. If a limited number of firsties can successfully get the Brigade through a weekend, then the Academy should have faith that a limited number of first class can get the Brigade through a weekday. This progression from their current privileges to living off the yard is a leap of faith in the right direction. It will prove that the Naval Academy is thinking forward and looking out for its invested interests.

This privilege would teach soon to be graduates the basics of shore duty. They would have to wake themselves up, cook their own food, clean and iron their own uniforms, and manage a home, as well as, studying and leading the Brigade. They would still have to reside in set "duty rooms" while on duty, but other than noon-meal formation, noon-meal, and class they would be on their own. Those who are unsat in academics, conduct, honor, or physical education would be stripped of this privilege.

The second class would acquire acting roles in the Brigade. The first class midshipmen, who actually hold the second semester billet, would mentor them. This would not only provide the first class with a new leadership challenge, but it would also create a smoother reform in the fall. The new first class midshipman would have experience in their leadership positions, thus, thwarting the "reform vacuum", where the graduates leave and the new first class are immediately sucked into the vacancies.

By the time Reform starts in the fall, a few newly commissioned officers would already be on their ships. How can these new J.O.'s be responsible for their subordinates if they cannot be responsible for themselves?

How has the academy improved their Junior Officer skills? There are Practicum courses for each Community. However, how effective are they? Will the surface practicum be able to replace the time spent at Surface Warfare Officer's School as it is being phased out for Academy students? This would mean that after 30 days of leave, new ensigns would be sent immediately to their ships. Hopefully, the Practicum course will be enough to prepare the first class midshipman adequately for life as a new Junior Officer. If not, they will be in for a rude awakening out at sea.

We are a country at war. The Academy is a leadership laboratory, where you can make mistakes, learn, and move on, not a combat field where you make a mistake, kill yourself as well as your troops, and not come home. Would it not make more sense to allow the first class midshipman to make mistakes here at the Academy, before commissioning, instead of out in the fleet where those same mistakes could cause dire consequences?

It may be too late for the class of '02, but what about the subsequent classes? Will they get a chance to learn what it takes to live on their own? A brief or a book cannot teach independence, yet experience with guidance can. Therefore, why not let the firsties focus on their new lives instead of the Brigade? It will produce junior officers, well prepared to fight on and off the battlefield.

Not Seeing Officer Pay Yet

by Midn 1/C Elizabeth Vary

Firsties are firsties until May 24th. They are not "Ensign Selects" or "2nd Lieutenant Selects," but rather still midshipmen at USNA. Therefore, their job entails running the Brigade of Midshipmen, not coasting towards the Fleet.

One might argue that firsties need to spend at least their second semester in preparation for the Fleet. Then the second-class would take charge prematurely and three and a half years of firstie experience would be wasted. In addition, a semester spent in senior slump would benefit neither the firsties nor the Brigade.

To prepare for the Fleet assumes that one can replicate the Fleet? And how does one do this? It is an impossible task, as Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" varies from ship to ship, from squadron to squadron, from MEU to MEU. Even each Division Officer or Platoon Commander differs from the next. A semester spent in preparation for an unknown is certainly a waste of time and a disservice to the Academy.

Part of the value of being commissioned is that the future is somewhat unknown. As an officer, you must be able to adjust to difficult situations. When reporting to a new command, you don't know exactly what you are going to be doing until your CO passes down his intent. No amount of preparation could help you predict the leadership style of a new CO.

Furthermore, situations here at USNA are applicable to the Fleet. A military officer works with people, and that is what midshipmen do here on a daily basis. By being an active participant in one's squad or company, or being a captain of a sports team, one garners immense experience in leadership.

Just being a midshipman alone is leadership training. How often do the administration, faculty, and officers use the phrase "leadership laboratory?" This catchy phrase refers to the unique atmosphere at USNA and especially the unique structure of the Brigade. The firsties compose the top rung of the Midshipman ladder, and without their expertise and guidance, the Brigade would be inexperienced and misled.

The squad is the most basic unit of leadership training. Beginning with plebe year, midshipmen are members of these squads and watch the leadership of youngsters, second-class, and the all-powerful firstie. The youngsters are key for mentoring and the second-class for training, but the first-class lead the squad. They are in charge of accountability, of inspections, of counseling – in short they are in charge. The firstie is replicating, albeit on a smaller scale, what they will be doing as a junior officer in the Fleet: leading a small division of people.

Outside of squads, firsties mimic other Fleet leadership roles and positions. Whether on the Company, Battalion, Regimental, or Brigade Level, first-class midshipmen learn the intricacies of operations, administration, and other billets that they will serve in the Fleet. They turnover the brigade to the second-class early enough to focus on their own commissioning and beyond, so there is no need to rush the turnover by a full semester.

Another leadership situation at USNA, which is highly applicable to the Fleet, is that of a firstie, especially a team captain of a sports team. This senior is the only member of the team with three years of experience to lead the more junior members. He or she needs to remain an active member of the Brigade to be in touch with and in support of his or her team. After all, what is the junior officer other than the leader of a team?

Even classes here at the Academy are useful towards the Fleet. Maybe not the material, but certainly the time management and prioritization skills are unparalleled. A midshipman learns to juggle an inordinate number of tasks at once, and complete the most crucial ones first. Time management becomes a catch phrase here, as academics, sports, ECAs, and professional studies cram into mid-shipmen's lives. Such behavior is excellent preparation for the Fleet, as the JO, and indeed all officers, are bombarded with a multitude of demands on their scant time. Decisiveness will be necessary to separate the essential tasks from the unnecessary.

Some argue that the solution lies in liberty. Firsties now have a great deal of liberty, but many still do not cook, clean laundry, or pay bills by themselves. In addition, some may still not be able to handle the plethora of liberty in the Fleet, and will be partying up in Newport instead of studying those Mo-Boards. Possibly the best way to maintain the Brigade as well as graduate capable officers would be to give firsties junior-officer privileges and Brigade leadership responsibilities.

In the end, graduates will grow accustomed to the Fleet just as they did to the Academy. They will adjust accordingly to their new commands and new people. The class of 2002 will be no exception to the readiness of many classes before it, despite the added pressures of wartime placed upon it.

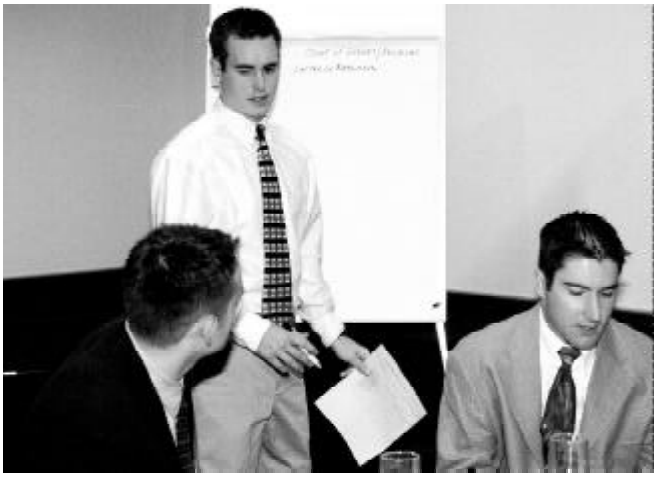
1/C CAPSTONE Character Excellence Seminar

by CDR Damon Singleton and LCDR Karen McGraw

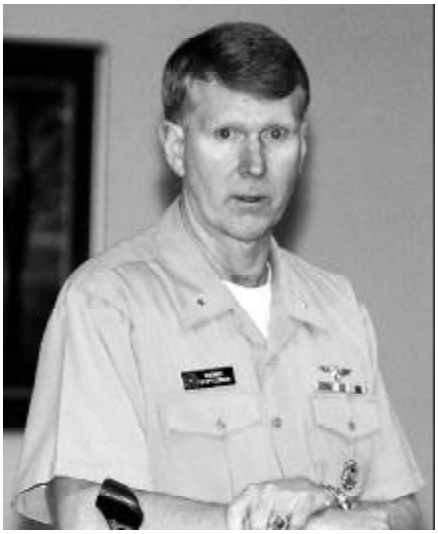
Feedback from midshipmen, faculty, and staff prompted the creation of a new approach to character development created specifically for First Class Midshipmen. Entitled the CAPSTONE Character Excellence Seminar, its goal is to provide First Class Midshipmen the opportunity to discuss complex ethical and moral issues. These seminars are the culmination of a midshipman's four years of participation in character development programs at the Naval Academy. They provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the testing of solutions to fleet-related problems as we ask them to draw upon the concepts they have learned in leadership and ethics courses as well as their practical experiences.

1/C Midshipmen are free to choose when to attend this seminar, scheduled 28 times throughout the academic year. Each daylong seminar is limited to 36 midshipmen, divided into groups of six with one or two faculty/staff facilitators per group. The day is divided into five challenging topics most relevant to the life of a junior officer. These topics are: "Truth and Loyalty – The Impact on Decision Making", "Competing Demands: Military Career and Family", " Responsibility and Accountability", "Justice and Mercy as a Military Leader", and "The Junior Officer and Projecting Our National Image."

Utilizing real case studies and accounts from several officers concerning actual events, scenarios are reviewed and discussed. Midshipmen are asked about their decision-making processes and as a group, come to consensus on the course of action they would take. Midshipmen are called upon to answer difficult questions such as: What would you do if you found yourself in this situation? What would you do if one of your sailors/ Marines were in a similar situation? What factors are important for you to consider? What does service before self mean? The midshipmen participants often find themselves in a quandary when they place themselves in the shoes of junior officers, and make some very difficult decisions that have some personal costs. After each topic discussion, the outcome is revealed to the group. The impacts of an officer's action or inaction are reflected upon, and the results are sobering for some midshipmen. Said one, "Using studies that were Fleet examples made the conversation much more relevant… made me think about examples I will actually face in under an year."



An added bonus to the day is the time reserved for the Capstone Distinguished Speaker Series. Each session, a different senior Navy or Marine Corps officer addresses the theme, "Ethical Decision Making in the Military." Our guests, Flag Officers such as Rear Admiral Stufflebeam, Rear Admiral Black, and Brigadier General Nash, offer great insight on the topic, as well as many lessons learned from their personal experiences.



The Capstone Career Excellence Seminar is designed to stimulate thinking about important and relevant issues that will be faced in the not too distant future. Our future leaders will soon be in positions that can challenge their morals and stress their character. The CAPSTONE seminar recognizes this unique challenge and gives each First Class Midshipman a valuable opportunity to test his or her thoughts, and challenge those of their peers. This experience is enhanced by input from experienced staff members who have lived through similar situations or who provide insight not otherwise considered, but important to think about, when making a decision.

CAPSTONE is one more step in the Character Development Division's goal to imbue Midshipmen with greater ability to discern between right and wrong while capitalizing the will power to do what is right even at great personal risk.

Rites of Passage

by Midn 2/C Anne Gibbon

The greatest prize is not hung around your neck, it is formed inside you. It is the strength of will, and sense of determination which anyone, who has ever pushed themselves past their breaking point, and still refused to quit, develops. ~Anonymous

Rites of passage at the Naval Academy have long been associated with the indoctrination process during plebe summer and plebe year, culminating in a daylong event, Sea Trials. But plebe year is blurred by routine, constant demands that are the same for every plebe. The real challenge of earning a commission as an officer begins after the completion of Sea Trials. It is then that you take your development as a leader into your own hands and sift through the various majors, sports teams, clubs, and ECA's to find the fire that will mold a rough plebe into a polished Ensign or 2ndLT. For many midshipmen the process they choose does not appear on their MidPerf, but the evidence is in their superior performance in the Fleet. There will always be mandatory honor training, Forrestal Lectures, and professional classes; however, the best aspect of the Academy is the allowance it gives midshipmen to find their own rites of passage.

Plebe year turns high school students into midshipmen. But for many, the pressure-cooker of that year does not compare to the cynicism and doubt of youngster year. It is a transition period that requires midshipmen to begin seeking challenges and taking responsibility for their own development into officers. Plebe year is structured to provide a base proficiency in time and stress management, following orders, and indoctrination into the military life. Challenges in the next three years can come from involvement in an ECA, graduating to an eventual position of leadership, training and administration positions within the company up to brigade level, as well as on the sports field. They all offer opportunities to learn the different traits required in a leader.

> *Great challenges offer the greatest rewards. How we meet them reveals the truth in all of us. Anonymous*

The most significant experiences for me have been learned on the water and on the ergometer. I am a midshipman first and a rower second, but the leadership lessons I hope to take to the Marine Corps were inspired of countless hours spent at the boathouse and on the water. The lessons of teamwork and personal mastery over pain combine to allow the individual to push through any obstacle. I have gained the confidence to assume the responsibilities of an officer by combining the lessons of physical challenges and life as a midshipman, and I have learned that limits can be broken and no challenge is too great.

The lessons we learn during our four years by the Bay teach us to set aside personal interests in favor of duty. Midshipmen put themselves through the mandatory stresses here as well as those of their own choosing so that they might create an environment where they gain confidence in their ability as warriors. Professor Shannon French of the Ethics Department says, "True rights of passage are carefully designed to allow those who endure them to prove something to themselves." Many of these rights of passage are individual and self-inflicted. Each midshipman who crosses the stage on graduation day has had to endure personal struggles to deserve the commission he or she receives. Plebe year teaches us that the leadership we came here to learn will not be handed to us. It takes responsibility to learn those qualities that will enable midshipmen to lead their sailors and Marines. The Academy administration understands this concept, and thus places a great emphasis on all positions of authority at the Academy. They empower the first class to organize and lead the Brigade.

The varying paths we each take as midshipmen lead us through our own rites of passage. We learn plebe year the skills it takes to tackle those challenges, and then learn through the next three years to seek them out and perform at a high level. Upon commissioning, we translate those skills we learned in the classroom, and the character we forged on the playing field into the qualities necessary to lead the men and women who will follow us.

> *One ought to be brave not under compulsion but because it is noble to do so. It is brave for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs. Aristotle*

Recognizing Humanity in Our Enemies

by Midn 3/C Ian Rummel

Politicians today have shown a marked tendency to view the world, with its six billion human inhabitants, in increasingly abstract terms. Popular culture is sometimes to blame: after "Star Wars" (1977) was released, it became a given fact in foreign policy that there was a "dark side" at work in the world. Whether the culpability lay with the Soviet Union, a communist, atheist society bent on total world domination, or with the rise of fundamentalist Islam and its supposed goal of jihad against the West, there was NATO and America on one side, opposing a terrible and hated aggressor. One might argue that the Nazis and perhaps Stalin's Soviet Union fit the pattern of an "evil empire," as President Reagan would label Russia in the 1980s: a society intending to eliminate all contentious ethnic, social, and political groups for its own gain.

However, an attempt to extrapolate the concept of "good versus evil" to modern warfare has serious faults, most notably in the desire to strip the enemy forces of their humanity, with the underlying goal of making them easier to defeat. Perhaps nothing in the conduct of modern warfare is as unsettling as this idea that the members of an enemy force can be stripped of their status as human beings in order to facilitate and later to justify their destruction. This distinction is hardly new; for millennia, human beings have fought wars as if the enemy were a nameless, faceless peril to be destroyed as completely and as ruthlessly as possible. The luxury of two enemies recognizing common traits and waging war based on the principles of each has been mostly relegated to politically advanced civilizations: Greece, ancient China, Renaissance Europe, and seventeenth-century Japan, to name a few.

Notwithstanding, the world today is a different place. Invasions are no longer tolerated as a legitimate way for a state to acquire territory. Modern alliances have been set up based on unified political and diplomatic doctrine, notably NATO, the United Nations, the Warsaw Pact, ANZAC, and others. There is little practical resemblance to the alliances which caused Europe to erupt into World War I. The whole purpose behind truly modern warfare (distinguished from wars simply conducted with modern weapons) is the maintenance of human rights and boundaries across the world. Save the occasional transgression into territorial interests based on fossil fuels, most wars today are begun with claims of wrongdoing rather than invasion, and goals of safety rather than revenge. If such a base form of human expression as organized killing can have an ideal form, most would argue that this is it; that it will always be necessary to take up arms to protect the weak from the strong, should aggression take place. Not all nations incorporate such ideas into their doctrine, however, and desires for land and revenge do exist. Sometimes, as in the Vietnam War, enough of a cultural gap between the major combatants exists that the individual soldiers on one side may adopt a skewed viewpoint of why they are fighting. Military leaders must carefully explore this question: under what circumstances is dehumanization permissible in war?

One stipulation of "Just War" theory, developed by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, is that to wage war, the enemy must be an entity that has committed some fault, and deserves to be attacked (Lucas, 391). Another prerequisite to this "just cause" must be the recognition of the party at fault as a group of human beings who have done wrong; much as they have caused evil, they have done so by allowing human nature to take precedence over a higher moral standard. This concept is a difficult one to promulgate, however, especially in guerilla warfare and in other unconventional conflicts where losses are high and the civilian population is armed. As a rule, it is much harder to convince members of the military that the enemy is human, is fighting for a perceived cause, and most of all does not agree on who is the evildoer. A notable example of dehumanization took place during the United States' involvement in Vietnam, where numerous incidents such as the massacre at My Lai showed what a group of American soldiers could do if the rules of ethics in warfare were not followed. It is important to note that while a change needs to occur in the motivation for fighting wars, the need to take up arms has often been a reactionary measure against the "improvement" of humanity, notably in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia.

In some countries, nonetheless, dehumanization is an essential part of the conduct of warfare. Tribal conflicts in Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America are often the most prominent sources of war being waged against non-humans. This type of warfare is primitive not because of its perpetrators and their level of civilization, but in that the goals to be achieved are basic. There is no larger concern than the immediate success of the unit, whether

this is an individual, a clan, a tribe, or an entire nation. Civilization, however, has required room to grow; as cultures have crossed paths, a more sophisticated interaction, to include war fighting, has developed. The consequences of living in a multicultural environment have made humanity all the richer; but conflicts still exist, and nations must be prepared to prevent these. The traditional forms of mutual destruction for self-interest no longer apply.

In the twenty-first century, internationally recognized militaries (such as those allied with the United Nations) are not maintained only for the defense of a people, an ethnicity, or a religion. Even the United States, a country in which patriotism and national interest are quite commonplace terms, has fought only three of its major wars for the direct defense of the national homeland. The rest have been international police actions, of which many have had a direct impact on the American people but also on the global community. One might ask where self-defense does fit on the global scene: the answer is that it is encouraged of a state, on the condition that the fighting is for that purpose alone. International organizations such as the United Nations would ideally ensure that no mass murder would occur on either side, regardless of the outcome: hence the recent decision in the former Yugoslavia to request that the Kosovo Liberation Army also disarm after the defeat of Serbia. The system of supportive alliances and international regulation is far from perfect, but it is more consistent with the aims of world peace than requiring endangered countries to adopt an "us vs. them" mindset. The simplest expressions of survival, the need to "kill or be killed," among them, have a definite place in today's world. This place is on the battlefield, not in the political system; and with it an additional mandate to destroy only the enemy soldiers and to force an opposing power to back down. Therefore, while it is permissible and sometimes effective to dehumanize an enemy during a firefight, it is not permissible to start a war based on the non-humanity of an enemy.

A world in which "just wars" are the only wars might look very different indeed. It seems somehow sick and deranged for the world to seek a more advanced form of mutual destruction, but this may be our only hope of long-term survival. At the heart of this change in warfare lies the need to recognize the human beings in our enemies. Ignoring the similarities between peoples can result in mass murder and even genocide on the part of the victors, as evidenced by the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Rwanda; recognition of humanity, on the other hand, allows a fighting nation to be introspective and to ensure that war is waged for the right reasons.

The results of such a human-based worldview could be far-reaching. The modern world must someday come to grips with the fact that all humans have the same intrinsic value, by birth and not by nationality. The deciding factor in assigning qualities of "good" and "evil" is what each individual person decides to do; though it may be unsettling to acknowledge that the enemy is a human being not far removed from the soldiers fighting for the friendly side, it is essential to realize this fact. Writes Robert Heinlein in Time Enough for Love: "Your enemy is never a villain in his own eyes. Keep this in mind; it may offer a way to make him your friend. If not, you can kill him without hate—and quickly." (Heinlein 242) The recognition of certain things in common with the opposing side (i.e. the value of national security, the desire to improve quality of life) is essential to success in both war and its peaceful counterpart, diplomacy.

Finally, there are those who, by our analysis as a nation, are beyond diplomacy or coercion. Where do we draw the line in recognizing our own species? Perhaps we don't. Such language as "crimes against humanity," long invoked in international tribunals or in warfare, identifies those who have transgressed and injured human society; though by many ethical analyses such war criminals should lose their right to life, they should not lose their humanity as well. The United States' position as a superpower is a result of more than two hundred years of political self-analysis and international relations; to deny that human beings frequently do the unthinkable as part of our nature would be naive. Therefore, today's Navy and Marine Corps, often acknowledged as the "tip of the spear" in war, must make an essential distinction as they prepare to fight. Soldiers and sailors alike must have the mental clarity to see America's enemies as the human beings they are. But should the need arise, they must also and most importantly possess the moral courage to annihilate these enemies in spite of and because of their human qualities; such is the burden placed upon not only America but all influential powers in today's world.

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Distinguished Graduate Award

by Anne Sharpe

The United States Naval Academy Alumni Association has announced this year's selection of outstanding Naval Academy graduates to receive the 2002 Distinguished Graduate Award.

The recipients of the 2002 award are: Vice Admiral Charles S. Minter, Jr., USN (Ret.), Class of 1937, former United States Naval Academy Commandant of Midshipmen and Superintendent; The Honorable James E. Carter, Class of 1947, the 39th President of the United States; Admiral Carlisle A.H. Trost, USN (Ret.), Class of 1953, former Chief of Naval Operations; and Colonel John W. Ripley, USMC (Ret.), Class of 1962, a Vietnam war hero whose awards include the Navy Cross and Silver Star for heroism in the face of the enemy.

"While there are numerous graduates of the Naval Academy who have distinguished themselves in many walks of life, the 2002 selection is particularly exceptional because it recognizes four alumni who have served the Naval Academy, the naval service, and our country," said George P. Watt, Jr., President and CEO of the United States Naval Academy Alumni Association.

"Their collective service epitomizes character and leadership qualities that Naval Academy graduates have given to our country for 156 years and will provide our country for years to come. This award recognizes four outstanding individuals, but it is also recognition of a world class institution that continues to produce leaders of great character – leaders who serve our nation."

The Distinguished Graduate Award Selection Committee, chaired by Admiral Kinnaird R. McKee, USN (Ret.), Class of 1951, chose the four out of a large assembly of distinguished graduates, covering four decades of service. This year marks the fourth year the award has been given.

"The four distinguished selectees have all made an enormous impact on this institution and on the nation," said academy Superintendent, Vice Admiral John Ryan. "President Carter, Admiral Trost, Vice Admiral Minter, and Colonel Ripley have changed this academy and the country for the better, and we are deeply indebted to them for a lifetime of service and dedication," Ryan said.

Candidates for the Distinguished Graduate Award are living graduates of the United States Naval Academy who: have provided a lifetime of service to the nation or armed forces, have made significant and distinguished contributions to the nation via their public service, and have demonstrated a strong interest in supporting the Navy and the United States Naval Academy.

The United States Naval Academy Alumni Association is a non-profit, independent, self-supporting corporation with over 46,000 members and some 80 chapters around the world. To learn more please see our Web site at www.usna.com.

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